

Chapter VIII

THE CAMPAIGN IN THE SOUTH: VIRGINIA, THE CAROLINAS, AND GEORGIA, 1776–1782

On 29 March 1776 Maj. Gen. Charles Lee arrived in Williamsburg, Virginia, to assume command of the Continental Army's newly created Southern Department, whose theater of operations comprised Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. Only a few weeks earlier Lee had been in New York directing an ambitious rebel effort to secure that city's defenses. Now he was far away in the new theater where the enemy threatened a major offensive to restore royal authority. Lord Dunmore, Virginia's last royal governor, was poised menacingly on Gwynn Island near the mouth of the Rappahannock River, where he had taken refuge after burning Norfolk in January 1776.

As an experienced officer Lee astutely recognized the dangers presented by the southern states' extensive navigable waterways, which allowed the enemy, as he put it, "with canvas wings" to "fly from one spot to another."¹ Accordingly, Lee suggested that Virginia adopt measures to secure her rivers from enemy depredations. He recommended building armed galleys and floating or fixed batteries, and placing gunproof mantlets along the shoreline.²

Achieving an adequate state of defense would not be easy: artificers and carpenters were generally unmotivated and engineers in too short supply. As a consequence Lee urged that companies of carpenters, blacksmiths, and artificers be established, and he pleaded with Washington for assistance. "Had we arms for the minute men and half a dozen good field Engineers, we might laugh at . . . [the enemy's] efforts," Lee protested, "but in this article (like the rest of the Continent) we are miserably deficient."³

Lee did have two engineers, Baron Massenbach and John Stadler, assigned to his department. Having been advised by Virginia and North Carolina delegates in Congress that "there was not a single field engineer in their Provinces," Lee, in Baltimore on his way to Virginia, had personally recruited Massenbach.⁴ As for Stadler, Virginia had employed him earlier. Hardly a month after his arrival in the south Lee justifiably worried that

SOUTHERN THEATER OF WAR. *This modern map locates engagements in the South in the period 1778–81.*

U.S. Army Center of Military History

both engineers would resign their commissions because they received a "wretched pittance" equal to that of "common carpenters or bricklayers."⁵ Also, Lee got no cooperation on his request to Congress to send him Capt. William Smith, who had served him as an engineer in New York City.

With a greater enemy assault threatening in the Carolinas, Lee left Virginia before mid-May. Stadler stayed behind with Brig. Gen. Andrew Lewis and erected shore works facing Dunmore's Gwynn Island stronghold. Dunmore remained there until a rebel assault led by Lewis and supported by fire from Stadler's fortifications drove him out on July 9.

On 1 June 1776 the British fleet, carrying more than three thousand troops commanded by Sir Henry Clinton and Lord Cornwallis, appeared near the islands off Charleston, South Carolina. Lee rushed there, arriving on the 4th with little time to spare in readying the city's defenses.

Fortunately South Carolinians had recognized the potential danger and had taken steps earlier to protect their fine seaport from attack. In January 1776 local authorities led by John Rutledge, president of the South Carolina General Assembly, had planned a new fort—a square redoubt with bastioned corners—to be erected on low-lying, sandy Sullivan's Island, several miles below Charleston. The rebels hoped that enemy ships would never sail past that point or nearby James Island, where large guns were mounted. Although they threw up some breastworks immediately surrounding the city, they concentrated their effort on Sullivan's Island.

Beginning in March Col. William Moultrie of the 2d South Carolina Regiment had overseen the construction on Sullivan's Island. Faced with a shortage of laborers, Moultrie utilized large numbers of black slaves and mechanics. The workers cut logs from the soft wood of locally flourishing palmetto trees, a variety of palm. They placed the logs in parallel lines sixteen feet apart and filled the intervening space with sand. While wooden walls were generally inferior to stone walls, the resilience of palmetto wood made it considerably better than hard wood for resisting cannonfire.

When Lee arrived the American defenses on Sullivan's Island were far from complete, but once again enemy delays and adverse weather conditions gave the Americans precious time to improve their position. Despite grave misgivings about Fort Sullivan, Lee boldly took charge of the Charleston defenses. His presence lifted the townspeople's spirits. But "Courage alone will not suffice in war," he reminded the Charlestonians; "true soldiers and magnanimous citizens must brandish the pick-axe and spade, as well as the sword, in defense of their country."⁶ Determined that the army would contribute its best effort, Lee ordered Moultrie to provide Massenbach with the workmen and materials needed to complete the works.

On Sullivan's Island Lee's major concern was protecting the fort's rear (north side) and providing a means of escape to the mainland. Massenbach himself was "frighten'd out of his wits" because retreat from Sullivan's Island appeared so precarious.⁷ Lee personally oversaw the addition of a traverse, breastwork, banquette, and other works on the fort's vulnerable rear.⁸ He

was particularly concerned that Ferdinand de Brahm, an engineer employed by South Carolina, did not know the degree of talus required for the traverse.⁹ Lee ordered Moultrie to monitor de Brahm's performance closely and promised, if necessary, to try to supply someone with more experience.

Col. Moultrie's memoirs vividly describe American preparations for the inevitable attack. Of special importance was Lee's initial view that the existing fort was "a slaughter pen" which ought to be abandoned. But that course being unfeasible politically and psychologically, Lee set about to provide a means of retreat. Despite the general opinion that two frigates could reduce the town, Moultrie maintained consistently that the fort could hold against both the fleet and Clinton's land forces.

1. "I NEVER WAS UNEASY ON NOT HAVING A RETREAT"

From William Moultrie's memoirs.

At this time [April 1776] it was the general opinion, especially among the sailors, that two frigates would be a sufficient force to knock the town about our ears: notwithstanding our number of batteries with heavy cannon; but in a few weeks (28 June) experience taught us, that frigates could make no impression upon our palmetto batteries.

April. General [John] Armstrong arrived from the northward, and took command of the troops in South-Carolina; he was a brave man, and a good officer, but not much acquainted with our manner of defence which was principally forts and batteries, with heavy pieces of cannon: we had at that time at least, 100 pieces of cannon mounted in different parts of our harbor.

May 31. Expresses were sent to the president¹⁰ from Christ-church parish, informing him that a large fleet of British vessels were seen off Dewee's Island, about twenty miles to the northward of the bar; and on the first of June they displayed about fifty sail before the town, on the out side of our bar. The sight of these vessels alarmed us very much, all was hurry and confusion, the president with his council busy in sending expresses to every part of the country, to hasten down the militia; men running about the town looking for horses, carriages, and boats to send their families into the country; and as they were going out through the town gates to go into the country, they met the militia from the country marching into town; traverses were made in the principal streets; fleches thrown up at every place where troops could land; military works going on every where, the lead taking from the windows . . . to cast into musket balls, and every preparation to receive an attack, which was expected in a few days.

June 4. General [Charles] Lee arrived from the northward, and took the command of the troops; his presence gave us great spirits, as he was

known to be an able, brave, and experienced officer, though hasty and rough in his manners, which the officers could not reconcile themselves to at first; it was thought by many that his coming among us was equal to a reinforcement of 1000 men, and I believe it was, because he taught us to think lightly of the enemy, and gave a spur to all our actions. After Gen. Lee had waited upon the president, and talked with him upon his plan of defence, he hurried about to view the different works, and give orders for such things to be done as he thought necessary; he was every day and every hour of the day on horse back, or in boats viewing our situation and directing small works to be thrown up at different places; when he came to Sullivan's Island, he did not like that post at all, he said there was no way to retreat, that the garrison would be sacrificed; nay, he called it a "slaughter pen," and wished to withdraw the garrison and give up the post, but president Rutledge insisted that it should not be given up. Then Gen. Lee said it was "absolutely necessary to have a bridge of boats for a retreat;" but boats enough could not be had, the distance over being at least a mile. Then a bridge was constructed of empty hogsheads buoyed at certain distances, and two planks from hogshead to hogshead; but this would not answer, because when Col. [Thomas] Clark was coming over from Haddrell's [Point], with a detachment of 200 men; before they were half on, it sunk so low, that they were obliged to return: Gen. Lee's whole thoughts were taken up with the post on Sullivan's Island; all his letters to me show how anxious he was at not having a bridge for a retreat; for my part, I never was uneasy on not having a retreat because I never imagined that the enemy could force me to that necessity; I always considered myself as able to defend that post against the enemy. . . . Besides had they made their landing good, the riflemen would have hung upon their flanks for three miles as they marched along the beach, and not above fifty yards from them.

Col. Thompson had orders that if they could not stand the enemy they were to throw themselves into the fort, by which I should have had upwards of 1000 men in a large strong fort, and Gen. Armstrong in my rear with 1500 men, not more than one mile and an half off, with a small arm of the sea between us, that he could have crossed a body of men in boats to my assistance, this was exactly my situation; I therefore felt myself perfectly easy because I never calculated upon Sir. Henry Clinton's numbers to be more than 3000 men; as to the men-of-war, we should have taken every little notice of them if the army had attacked us.

Gen. Lee one day on a visit to the fort, took me aside and said, "Col. Moultrie, do you think you can maintain this post." I answered him "Yes I think I can," that was all that passed on the subject between us: another time Capt. Lamperer, a brave and experienced seaman, who had been master of a man-of-war, and captain of a very respectable privateer many years ago visited me at the fort after the British ships came over our bar;

while we were walking on the platform looking at the fleet, he said to me: "well Colonel what do you think of it now," I replied that "we should beat them." "Sir" said he "when those ships (pointing to the men-of-war) come to lay along side of your fort, they will knock it down in half an hour," (and that was the opinion of all the sailors,) then I said, "we will lay behind the ruins and prevent their men from landing."

Gen. Lee, I was informed, did not like my having the command of that important post, he did not doubt my courage, but said "I was too easy in command," as his letters shew; but after the 28th June he made me his bosom friend: our fort at this time was not nearly finished; the mechanics and negro laborers were taken from all the works about the town, and sent down to the Island to complete our fort, we worked very hard, but could not get it nearly finished before the action.

—Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 1:139–44.

On the morning of 28 June 1776 the enemy launched an attack against Fort Sullivan. A surgeon on the British fleet described the rebels' response: "The Provincials reserved their fire until the shipping were advanced within point blank shot . . . it was slow, but decisive indeed; they were very cool, and took great care not to fire except their guns were exceedingly well directed."¹¹ In the observer's view the rebel artillery was "surprisingly well served" under command of Massenbach and de Brahm. The surgeon further noted that "General Lee had made such a disposition of masked batteries, troops, etc. that it is the opinion of all the officers of the Army . . . that if our troops had attacked, they must have been cut off."¹²

As Moultrie explained in his memoirs, an accident doomed the British naval attack on the fort's west side. Had that maneuver succeeded, Moultrie realized, "they would have enfiladed us in such a manner, as to have driven us from our guns." Also, as demonstrated elsewhere, unforeseen circumstances thwarted Clinton's attempts at a coordinated flanking movement. But it seems clear from Moultrie's account that the fort's palmetto construction and the accuracy of the rebel artillery fire were still crucial to the outcome.

2. "NEVER DID MEN FIGHT MORE BRAVELY, AND NEVER WERE MEN MORE COOL"

From William Moultrie's memoirs.

June, 1776. On the morning of the 28th of June, I paid a visit to our advance guard (on horse back three miles to the eastward of our fort) while I was there, I saw a number of the enemy's boats in motion, at the back of

Long-Island, as if they intended to descent upon our advanced post; at the same time I saw the men-of-war loose their topsails; I hurried back to the fort as fast as possible; . . . I immediately ordered the long roll to beat, and officers and men to their posts: We had scarcely manned our guns, when . . . ships of war came sailing up, as if in confidence of victory; as soon as they came within the reach of our guns, we began to fire; they were soon a-breast of the fort . . . let go their anchors, with springs upon their cables, and begun their attack most furiously about 10 o'clock, A. M. and continued a brisk fire, till about 8 o'clock, P. M. . . .

The Thunder-Bomb had the beds of her mortar soon disabled; she threw her shells in a very good direction; most of them fell within the fort, but we had a morass in the middle, that swallowed them up instantly, and those that fell in the sand in and about the fort, were immediately buried, so that very few of them bursted amongst us: At one time, the Commodore's¹³ ship [the *Bristol*] swung round with her stern to the fort, which drew the fire of all the guns that could bear upon her: we supposed he had had the springs of her cables cut away: The words that passed along the plat-form by officers and men, were, "mind the Commodore, mind the two fifty gun ships:" most all the attention was paid to the two fifty gun ships, especially the Commodore, who, I dare say, was not at all obliged to us for our particular attention to him; the killed and wounded on board those two fifty gun ships confirms what I say. During the action, Gen. Lee paid us a visit through a heavy line of fire, and pointed two or three guns himself; then said to me, "Colonel, I see you are doing very well here, you have no occasion for me, I will go up to town again," and then left us.

When I received information of Gen. Lee's approach to the fort, I sent Lieut [Francis] Marion, from off the plat-form, with 8 or 10 men, to unbar the gate-way, (our gate not being finished) the gate-way was barricaded with pieces of timber 8 or 10 inches square, which required 3 or 4 men to remove each piece; the men in the ships tops, seeing those men run from the platform concluded 'we were quitting the fort,' . . . Never did men fight more bravely, and never were men more cool; their only distress was the want of powder. . . .

There cannot be a doubt, but that if we had had as much powder as we could have expended in the time, that the men of war must have struck their colors, or they would certainly have been sunk, because they could not retreat, as the wind and tide were against them; and if they had proceeded up to town, they would have been in a much worse situation: They could not make any impression on our fort, built of palmetto logs and filled in with earth, our merlons were 16 feet thick, and high enough to cover the men from the fire of the tops: The men that we had killed and wounded [12 killed, 24 wounded] received their shots mostly through the embrasures.

An author, who published in 1779, says "the guns were at one time so long silenced, that it was thought the fort was abandoned; it seems ex-

traordinary that a detachment of land forces were not in readiness on board of the transports, or boats, to profit of such an occasion."

The guns being so long silent, was owing to the scarcity of powder which we had in the fort, and to a report that was brought me, "that the British troops were landed between the advance-guard and the fort;" it was upon this information, that I ordered the guns to cease firing, or to fire very slow upon the shipping; that we should reserve our powder for the musketry to defend ourselves against the land forces, there being a great scarcity of powder at this time.

At one time, 3 or 4 of the men-of-war's broadsides struck the fort at the same instant, which gave the merlons such a tremor, that I was apprehensive that a few more such would tumble them down. During the action, three of the men-of-war, in going round to our west curtain, got entangled together, by which the Acteon frigate went on shore on the middle ground; the Sphinx lost her bow-sprit; and the Syren cleared herself without any damage; had these three ships effected their purpose, they would have enfiladed us in such a manner, as to have driven us from our guns: It being a very hot day, we were served along the plat-form with grog in firebuckets, which we partook of very heartily: I never had a more agreeable draught than that which I took out one of those buckets at the time; it may be very easily conceived what heat and thirst a man must feel in this climate, to be upon a plat-form on the 28th June, amidst 20 or 30 heavy pieces of cannon, in one continual blaze and roar; and clouds of smoke curling over his head for hours together; it was a very honorable situation, but a very unpleasant one. . . . at night when we came to our slow firing (the ammunition being nearly quite gone) we could hear the shot very distinctly strike the ships: At length the British gave up the conflict: The ships slipt their cables, and dropped down with the tide, and out of the reach of our guns. . . .

Early the next morning was presented to our view, the Acteon frigate, hard, and fast aground; at about 400 yards distance; we gave her a few shot, which she returned but they soon set fire to her, and quitted her. . . .

THE CHEVALIER DE CAMBRAY-DIGNY. *This Italian-born officer-candidate in the French artillery received his commission in the Continental Army as a lieutenant colonel of engineers in June 1778. As Brigadier General Lacklan McIntosh's chief engineer, Cambray (1751–1822) built Fort McIntosh, about thirty miles northwest of Pittsburgh on the Ohio River, in November 1778. The fort, which was abandoned in August 1779, was designed to help curb Indian raids on the frontier. Cambray also served as an engineer during the siege of Savannah in 1779 and at Charleston in 1780. Charles Willson Peale painted this portrait of the chevalier.*

Independence National Historical Park Collection



the fall of 1776 Lee returned north.

The other ships lay at the north point of Morris's Island we could plainly see they had been pretty roughly handled, especially the Commodore.

. . . A few days after the action, we picked up, in and about the fort, 1200 shot of different calibers that was fired at us, and a great number of 13 inch shells.

—Moultrie, *Memoirs*, 1:174–81.

Lee, who confessed "I never in my life felt myself so uneasy," was astonished by the defenders' courage. He attributed the low number of American casualties to the strength of the works and praised the valiant efforts of the South Carolinians.¹⁴ His last-minute drive to fortify Charleston proper had brought the city to a remarkable state of readiness. Even had the outer defenses fallen, Charleston doubtless could have held on.

The repulse of the British at Charleston was a sweet victory indeed. For two years the enemy declined further action in the south. But at the time Lee took little comfort in the outcome: as an astute officer he feared the British would soon return and, worst of all, find his countrymen unprepared. "It is not impossible," Lee cautioned, "that the late repulse of the Enemy may be fatal to us. We seem now all sunk into a most secure and comfortable sleep."¹⁵ Throughout the war that lethargic tendency to support defensive works only in the face of a direct enemy threat—and even then begrudgingly—was sometimes the rebels' worst enemy. In fact Lee spent the remainder of his service in the Southern Department trying to convince local authorities to upgrade their defenses.

Shortly after the victory at Charleston Lee took personal command of Continental forces in Georgia. He met with state deputies and suggested immediate measures for local defense. Lee appealed to the Continental Congress for money and urged South Carolinians to help out too. On the Georgia frontier Indians were a constant menace. Lee proposed using the row galleys, armed boats, and small forts or redoubts to protect the state's extensive waterways. In Georgia as in South Carolina he encountered on the one hand reluctance to act and on the other a tendency to propose unattainable schemes. "I shou'd not be surpris'd," Lee declared in exasperation, "if they were to propose mounting a body of Mermaids on Alligators."¹⁶

During the summer of 1776 Lee's major concern in South Carolina was to construct a chain of at least four redoubts to bolster Sullivan's Island and secure the two bridges linking it with the mainland. Without the new works he believed it would be "a very precarious Post."¹⁷ He assigned Massenbach to lay out the new defenses.¹⁸ In view of the plans for Georgia, for Sullivan's Island, and for some new works at nearby Port Royal, it was little wonder that Lee again implored Congress to send him more engineers. "It is really impossible to carry on the public business without them," he complained.¹⁹ But it was still 1776: trained engineers were everywhere in short supply. In the fall of 1776 Lee returned north.

For the next two years the enemy conceded control of the south to the rebels, but in late 1778 they began a campaign to conquer the region. Savannah, Georgia, was their first target. Having gone for months without a scare, the city had let its fortifications crumble. With defenses weakened and troops hopelessly outnumbered and outflanked, the Americans were forced to give up Savannah in the final days of 1778. Quick capture of Sunbury and Augusta followed. Royal authority was reestablished in Georgia.

In May 1779 British General Augustine Prevost drove Colonel Moultrie from Purisburg, South Carolina, to Charleston. This time Charleston's mainland defenses were more advanced than in 1776 but they were far from formidable. Col. Charles Senf,²⁰ the state's engineer, worried that the lines were too weak to hold back Prevost's men. Initially the patriots seriously considered giving up the city but finally resolved to fight it out. The Chevalier de Cambray-Digny, a lieutenant colonel in the Army Corps of Engineers, worked feverishly to shore up the lines on the left where they were weakest. Townsmen labored day and night under his direction to fortify Charleston Neck between the Ashley and Cooper rivers.²¹ The rebels' change of heart discouraged Prevost and he withdrew to Stono Ferry, South Carolina.

Maj. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, commander of the Southern Department since September 1778, attacked Prevost's entrenched camp on June 20. Well covered and reinforced, the British beat back the assault. Lincoln was confident his men could win by storming the enemy's works, but an unreconnoitered creek running in front of Prevost's redoubts deterred them.²² Among the wounded at Stono Ferry was Col. Jean Baptiste Joseph, the Chevalier de Laumoy, commander of the engineers during the attack.

Lincoln's biggest chance came in September 1779 when the French admiral Count d'Estaing arrived off Savannah with a fleet of thirty-three vessels. The Americans' hopes of liberating Georgia never seemed brighter. On the 16th d'Estaing demanded surrender. The weakened British garrison cleverly asked for a 24-hour reprieve, managed to get reinforcements, and decided to defend the city after all. Taking advantage of the delay, Capt. James Moncrieff, an engineer veteran of the Seven Years' War and the chief British engineer in Savannah, used slaves to strengthen his defenses.

Although Colonel Moultrie favored a direct attack, d'Estaing, advised by his engineers that a siege would take only ten days, opted for the latter. By October 8 d'Estaing was so frustrated by the slow progress of the trenches that he decided to abandon formal siege operations and make an immediate assault on the enemy's right at Spring Hill Redoubt. Reconnaissance reports by Laumoy and others assured him of success.

Unfortunately Prevost had recognized his vulnerability on the right and was prepared. The assault ended in disaster for the rebels. Only Bunker Hill was bloodier. Wounded, d'Estaing retreated to his flagship, while Lincoln withdrew to Charleston.

Antoine François Térance O'Connor, d'Estaing's chief engineer, kept a journal of the operation. Later d'Estaing added his own observations to the account. The combined document—presented below with d'Estaing's comments in italics—illustrates some of the difficulties encountered in attempts at Franco-American cooperation

3. "THIS STRANGE SIEGE WAS THE WORK OF PENELOPE"

From Antoine O'Connor's journal, with observations (in italics)
by Count d'Estaing.

Laying siege to a fortified place defended by a force almost equal to the one attacking it would seem to be absolutely impossible. My entire conduct would have been so if I had pursued objectives other than placing and supporting batteries as close as possible, intending to breach the sand works, making an approach by a trench, standing our ground at captured points and assaulting by column at one point an equally strong enemy, who was waiting for us and six hours earlier had dug to the rear a new trench supported by cannon. This indisputably would have been an entirely new chapter in the history of siege warfare.

The incalculable advantage of having cover within 400 yards of the enemy and of attacking suddenly determined the point of attack. It was also better than the other side because it was closer to the mouth of the Savannah River from which I was expecting large cannon that the men-of-war were to send me.

The Americans volunteered to furnish all the necessary tools and even workmen for the trenches. Work was easy in this soft, sandy soil.

On the 23rd [September 1779] the small number of tools that the Americans supplied together with our own, were scarcely sufficient for 300 workers.

At 7 p.m. I began digging the trench with 300 workers, supported by 600 grenadiers and chasseurs. The enemy only fired a few cannon shots at random, and despite our close proximity and the bright moonlight, they did not detect our presence.

During the night I dug a trench 206 yards long and started at the end of it a parallel trench 80 yards long which was only 300 yards away from their works.

SIEGE OF SAVANNAH, OCTOBER 1779. *This plan from a survey by an unidentified officer depicts British fortifications and American and French siege positions. Spring Hill Redoubt (11) is on the right. The French and American parallels are in the left center.*

National Archives

At dawn on the 24th the trench commander received orders to withdraw the workers and replace them with half of the guard for the trenches; the rest remained under arms in the trench and occupied that part of the parallel which was finished.

It is the nature of Americans to promise much and deliver little, this nation always counts on acquiring whatever it lacks. Most of the tools were gathered up from houses. They were hardly suitable for digging a trench, but the soil was so soft that they sufficed.

At 8 a.m. after a light enemy barrage three or four hundred enemy soldiers ambushed us on the left. The cry "to arms" went up as soon as they reached the parallel; our troops abandoned the trench, took up a position on the flank and repelled the enemy after a very hot exchange of musket fire. . . .

Our losses amounted to four officers killed, nine wounded, twenty-five chasseurs and grenadiers killed and sixty-six wounded. The enemy's could not have been less.

They asked for a cease-fire in order to collect their dead and wounded. . . .

On the night of the 24th we were supposed to continue the parallel up to the barracks, and the Americans were to dig another one up to that point from their side. The smaller number of tools and workers available convinced M. le general²³ to construct a battery immediately behind the communication trench and a little above the center of it. In this position it was only 425 yards away from the barracks.

The placement and construction of this battery have been justifiably criticized. The primary defect of its position compromised its effectiveness. That was recognized too late and later confirmed when we set up there a sufficient number of cannon to open fire on the barracks. Only on the left did the battery have the barracks in range. Moved forward a few yards and to an angle, the battery could have blown the barracks to pieces and had within its circular range not only the barracks but also the whole line of fortifications as far as the Spring Hill redoubt. Indolence often produces a lack of resourcefulness and too frequently prevents correcting mistakes that are made.

Because the communication trench between headquarters and the siege lines was not safe, M. le general ordered two more perpendicular trenches to be dug to the rear of the first one, and 300 Americans were busy at it during the night. This work was interrupted by the flight of the workers because of a false alarm. However, they resumed working after an hour.

It was reserved to this siege, impromptu in its origin, slow in its progress, and discreditable in its procedure, to do last what we should have done first. The poor security in the interval between the trench and headquarters cost several lives. . . . When workers are in short supply, ex-

perience must dictate the necessity of a work project before it is undertaken.

One hundred fifty of our men worked on the left battery, and at dawn two 18-pound pieces were erected there at barbette. At 7 a.m. they commenced firing. M. de Sane, commander of artillery, was killed. M. le general went out and ordered the firing stopped and the cannon removed from the battery.

M. de Sane, a bright young officer but one who had never experienced a siege, shared the opinion, which was almost universal, even among the French, that the first discharge of cannon would make the fortress surrender. The night before I inspected the battery that he built. When I told him that it had no communication whatsoever, he responded that he had enough ammunition for the next day, that he had no reason to leave it or send for anything during the day. I reminded him that M. Duportail's system which he was using in that battery at barbette, was good only for defense and has several other disadvantages in the opinion of M. Gribauval.²⁴ He multiplied them, when he should have used these fine gun carriages to coordinate the artillery with the engineers. I also mentioned to M. de Sane that the shallow depressions or foxholes between the cannon platforms that this system calls for, were not adequate to give cover to the cannoniers, and that, according to the same system, a semicircular path or small ditch between the recoil mechanism and the parapet was required so that the gunloaders would not be seen and could have protection from fire. He promised to carry out my suggestion and specifically pledged not to fire without an order from me. He sent a request for that order the next morning, and at that precise moment I heard the firing begin. I went there and found that it was hardest hit by cannon ball and grapeshot of any place I have ever seen.

On the night of the 25th, 100 Americans dug a communication trench between the main siege line and the left battery, and they finished the two other communication trenches started the previous night. We closed in the left battery with embrasures and mounted twelve guns, six 18-pounders and six 12-pounders. One hundred fifty of our men were used. . . .

On the night of the 27th with 150 men we began again a battery eighty yards in front of the beginning of the perpendicular trench running to the parallel trench dug on the first day. Twelve guns were assigned to it, five 18-pounders and seven 12-pounders. On the same night eighty men dug a communication trench to get to it. . . .

Continuation of the battery on the left. On the 28th we started a mortar battery on the left, 800 yards behind the trench. It held nine mortars with caliber of six and nine inches.

In the Americans' opinion the mortars were the alliance's ark of the covenant. They would make the walls of Jericho fall. I hoped so; but I was skeptical.

The night of the 28th the batteries were continued, and the Americans began a mortar battery on the left, a redoubt to hold four 6-pounders on its left flank and a post for fifty to sixty men on its right. They were to support the mortar battery.

The purpose of this small battery with very light cannon was to protect the mortar battery and obstruct an attack on its left. The Americans built this battery very well and very quickly. The embankment of their merlons was made differently than ours, and their seemed better to me. . . .

The night of [October] 2nd was employed in the construction of this battery and the continuation of three others.

The night of the 3rd, continuation of the same work. We fired 300 firebombs on the city and the enemy fortifications.

These 300 firebombs were the prologue to the first mortar shells. The deserters said that they caused distress; however, the ground was all sand in the city and the streets were not paved. We chose to begin firing the firebombs at night in order to make them more terrifying. They are less frightening in the daytime, but they were supposed to scare even more the citizens who had to sleep outside the fortifications. We employed several other small stratagems. We put too much confidence in them; to depend primarily on fear or on the enemy's mistakes is the riskiest strategy of war. From the start of this campaign that was the shaky basis of our plans.

At dawn on the 4th all the cannon were trained on the enemy's guns, and the bombardment began. The *Truite* flute²⁵ and the two American galleys also fired on the town to impede communications. The enemy responded with very lively fire. At 2:30 p.m., the new five-gun battery commenced firing. . . .

The night of the 4th was used to repair our batteries' embrasures, and firing became very scattered and weak. Because of the scarcity of tools that the Americans could furnish us and the extreme fatigue of our troops, worn out from moving cannon and munitions, constructing gabions and saucissons, we were not able to use this night for digging new trenches.

On the 5th our batteries continued their fire and annoyed the enemy considerably. They responded with only occasional cannon fire.

Here then was the high point of a siege, the moment when you fire and are no longer fired on, when the works are proceeding rapidly, when conquest comes almost without risk. Ordinarily it is the occasion of success and foreshadows the day of capitulation. Our position was quite different. The movements we saw in the interior lines told us that we had won nothing; new trenches were dug while the old ones were neither abandoned nor taken. If we took possession of the top of the walls, it would be endless. If we tried to pass between the cannon, of which they had more, we would find them newly placed on our flanks. They would reappear, they would fire, they would exact almost as many casualties as if the for-

*tress had never been taken, and we would find in the interior trenches new obstacles to overcome. This strange siege was the work of Penelope.*²⁶

The enemy worked untiringly on the interior lines and moved much artillery.

On the night of the 5th nothing was done; the army, fatigued by work and by the sickness brought on by the intemperate climate, was not in a position to furnish workers. . . .

On the 6th a hard rain slowed down our batteries' fire. Despite the bad weather, I opened a communication trench that night with 150 Americans about 160 yards from the enemy battery at the barracks, and I opened a parallel trench at the end of it. At midnight this work was interrupted by the flight of the workers because of a false alarm. Some of the tools were lost. However, I reassembled part of the workers; and, after giving them new tools, the work continued until dawn. This communication trench and parallel were ready to hold fifty grenadiers who were stationed there, and the trench was improved during the day of the 7th.

On the night of the 7th we were supposed to elongate this new parallel, to construct a battery on its left to destroy the one at the barracks, and to build another one further away, to the left of the Spring Hill redoubt. The lack of tools, the time necessary to construct this new battery, reasons perhaps based on the scarcities suffered by the fleet, persuaded M. le general to order an assault on the Spring Hill redoubt on the enemy's right.

The purpose of this new siegework was to attract the enemy's attention and our own. It was essential to convince everyone that we intended to proceed according to the rule of siege warfare and continue our works up to that point. The assault was decided upon; General Lincoln demanded it. Of course I hoped that it would succeed, but I was quite far from thinking that success was mathematically inevitable. If I had been by myself, I would not have attempted it at all. . . . The besieged had enough supplies for more than two months, and we did not. To mount a new regular attack, open a trench on another front and raise batteries there, which we could not support because of their distance from the camp, was entirely an American idea. Implementation of it would have been impossible. To let others think we would do so, however, was my intention. . . .

The different scouting missions that M. de Saumoy [Laumoy], an engineer presently in the American service, had ordered on that front, those that he had undertaken personally, the unanimous report of the different deserters, everything seemed to promise a favorable outcome.

On the morning of the 8th M. le general again went to reconnoiter the right side of the Spring Hill redoubt. The day was spent making dispositions for the attack. Twenty-two hundred of our troops and 1,000 Americans were selected for the attack on that section. The rest of the

troops, assigned to the trenches, had orders to make two successive sorties, the first one on the right and the second one on the left. Five hundred Americans were ordered to penetrate the city to the left of the enemy trenches and as close to the river as possible. The two American galleys and a few longboats had orders to make a feint attack by way of the river. . . .

On the 9th at midnight the army took up arms; at 3 a.m. we marched toward General Lincoln's camp where M. le general ordered a halt to wait for the scouts that they were obliged to furnish us. The American general could provide only one, and at 4 a.m. the two armies set out together for the Spring Hill redoubt, a mile away. Coming out of the woods a half mile from the enemy, a halt was called to close up the columns in accordance with the manner stipulated in the orders. . . . At 4:30 a.m. the army began to march. . . . Toward five o'clock we heard the musket fire of the diversionary attacks on the enemy's left. M. le comte de Bethisy's *avant-garde* penetrated to the abatis and chopped through it with hatchets. Immediately the enemy was within pistol range. A single volley of musketry and one round of cannon fire caused a great disorder. However, the vanguard jumped into the ditch which lay before them and uselessly climbed up the side. The cannon pieces which defended this ditch took a frightful toll. . . . Brisk grapeshot fire directed toward our left pushed part of our troops into the marsh. All of this created the greatest confusion, and the vanguard troops, realizing they had no support, were forced to fall back. They charged a second time without success. Disorder increased; most of the officers were wounded; part of the troops coming out of the marsh crowded into the others and confused the order of attack. However, M. le general partially rallied them, and the vanguard charged a third time, supported by the troops that M. le general had just reassembled. The charge lasted a long time; the enemy cannon exacted heavy losses; the fire of the Scotch Regiment which protected the redoubt was particularly galling. M. le general, wounded a second time by a ball through his leg and witness to the confusion which began again, ordered the retreat. M. le vicomte de Noailles covered it at the head of the reserve. Our troops suffered greatly in the retreat. M. le vicomte de Noailles formed the rear guard, and the enemy, who came out to their abatis, did not dare a sortie when they saw the determination and discipline of our rear guard, exposed to their cannon loaded with grapeshot.

The action did not last longer than an hour; it was very violent. The enemy, almost as numerous as we, as we learned later, had gathered the greater part of their force around the Spring Hill redoubt; and it appears certain that two American deserters alerted them about the point of attack the day before. That no attention at all was paid to the two feint attacks from the trenches is even more reason for thinking so. The diversion that 500 Americans were to attempt on the enemy's left did not take place.

They got lost. The two American galleys caused the attack from the river to fail. The first one, towed by longboats, dropped anchor. The second one was filled full of water, and M. le chevalier Durumain, ship's lieutenant who commanded this operation, could never get upriver as far as the city. . . .

On the 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, and 17th we were busy withdrawing the cannon and all their munitions. We loaded them at Thunderbolt on the Augustine Creek. All the wounded and the army's baggage were also loaded.

On the evening of the 18th the army abandoned the camp before Savannah, after the departure of the American army.

—Kennedy, *Muskets*, pp. 54–57,
59, 61–65, 67–69.

The failure of the French and American allies to retake Savannah encouraged British leaders to revive plans to capture Charleston. In fact, before the end of the year, Clinton left New York City on an expedition to do just that. The second week in February 1780, when Clinton arrived on Johns Island, thirty miles below Charleston, the city's fortifications were in shambles. Improvements were needed both north of the city and at Forts Moultrie²⁷ (Sullivan's Island) and Johnson (James Island), guarding the entrance to the harbor. In an attempt to reverse months of neglect, the state acted quickly. On Charleston Neck, a narrow isthmus connecting the city with the mainland to the north, the patriots readied a 1½-mile line of defenses. A masonry hornwork known as "the Citadel" stood in the center of this line. A sixteen-gun redoubt held down the southern tip of the city and thirteen additional forts were scattered along the Ashley and Cooper rivers.

By April 1 the British were in position to invest the city. Within a week enemy vessels had sailed past Fort Moultrie. The enemy's first parallel, engineered by Moncrieff, who had been promoted for his contributions at Savannah, was complete on the 10th. Clinton called on Lincoln to surrender. He refused, so the British general proceeded with a second parallel.

Despite heavy American artillery fire, the British continued to push forward. An American counterattack on April 24 proved only a temporary setback. By May 10 Clinton was within thirty paces of the American works, the firing of the chasseurs, light infantry troops armed with rifles, proved decisive. The city was doomed. Lincoln capitulated on the 12th. In doing so he surrendered an army of more than 200 officers, including seven generals and better than 2,300 non-commissioned officers and privates. The loss was stunning.

Ferdinand de Brahm, now a major in the Corps of Engineers, left an account of the siege, beginning with Clinton's arrival on February 9.²⁸ The journal is the most detailed record by an American engineer officer of the southern campaign prior to Yorktown.



4. AN ENGINEER DESCRIBES THE SIEGE OF CHARLESTON, 1780

From Ferdinand de Brahm's journal.

February 9, 1780—The English fleet arrived in Stono Inlet; the alarm was fired in Charlestown.

10th—The troops landed.

March 9 and 10, 1780—Seven vessels were sunk near the mouth of Cooper River, and cables fixed from one to the other, to prevent the entrance of this river.

13th—The enemy took possession of the land on Ashley River opposite the town, constructed a battery near the mouth of Wappoo, on the prolongation of Tradd Street.

21st—The English fleet passed the bar, and anchored in Five Fathom Hole.

25th—Our armed vessels before Fort Moultrie returned to town; their cannon were transported into the land batteries.

29th—The English army crossed Ashley River twelve miles above the town.

30th—The advanced guard of the enemy came within two miles of Charlestown, when a party of two hundred men, under Colonel John Laurens (and a little while after two field-pieces), went out against them, who, after a skirmish of some hours, returned towards sun-set. The fortifications of Charlestown were, even at this time, very incomplete. All the negroes in town were impressed, who, together with the parties detailed from the garrison, were henceforth employed upon the works.

31st—At day-break we observed that the enemy had opened his trenches in three places.

April 1 and 2, 1780—The enemy's works were a little extended, and ours augmented.

3d—This morning the battery was discovered upon a height, at Hampstead. A battery of four pieces was constructed on our right to oppose that of the enemy, from which, as well as from all the others, a continued firing of shot and bombs was kept up the following night along the lines.

4th—This morning, daylight discovered to us the enemy's battery very much injured.

5th—Last night's fire of our batteries was kept up as heretofore. The enemy's galley approached the town, and fired upon it all night. We began to dig wells in our front, and to close up the gorge of the horn work [the Citadel].

SIEGE OF CHARLESTON, 1780. *Ferdinand de Brahm, one of several skillful cartographers in the Revolutionary War Corps of Engineers, sketched this plan of British approaches and American defenses as they appeared in 1780.*

Engineer Museum, Fort Belvoir, Virginia

6th—The fire of the batteries and the works continued as before. To-day the reinforcement under General Woodford arrived.

7th—Very little fire from our batteries last night, and more on the part of the enemy. The enemy has prolonged the right of his first parallel. All our workmen employed digging wells.

8th—Last night the enemy commenced a battery of six pieces. All our workmen employed making traverses. A quarter of an hour before sunset, the English fleet passed Fort Moultrie, under a heavy fire on both sides, and anchored in a line near Fort Johnson. Nobody wounded or killed in Fort Moultrie. The fleet consisted of the following vessels:—One of 50 guns, two of 40, four frigates, two vessels armed *en flute*, and two other smaller ones; one of these armed *en flute* grounded on a bank called "The Green."

9th—The vessel which grounded was abandoned, and burnt by the crew last night. This morning the commencement of a battery appeared in front of our left. Our workmen employed as heretofore.

10th—The works of the enemy were advanced. Our negroes employed in making a battery of five pieces in redoubt, and the soldiers on fatigue in making traverses. This evening a parley was received from the enemy, demanding the surrender of the town; it was refused.

11th—Our batteries kept up a great deal of fire last night. The enemy had repaired his batteries, and mounted some cannon. Finished the battery in the redoubt. Our workmen employed in making traverses, and strengthening the profiles of some works. This evening Major Gilbank was accidentally killed, making some experiments with shells.

12th—Very little firing last night. The enemy had more cannon mounted. The workmen employed as before. Our sailors employed in elevating the parapet near Exchange Battery, and making embrasures to it. At 12 o'clock, meridian, three chalops [Shallops] passed Fort Moultrie, and joined the fleet, although fired upon all the time by the Fort.

13th—Very little firing last night. This morning one of the batteries of the enemy was finished, the others not quite; the trenches extended. This morning, at 9 o'clock, the enemy opened his batteries, firing bombs, carcasses and hot balls, which were returned with all our force from the batteries. This lasted about two hours, when the firing was abated on both sides, till about 5 o'clock, when all the fire was on the side of the enemy. We had one 18 pounder dismounted, and two houses burnt in town. Our workmen employed as before.

14th—A slow fire was kept up on both sides last night. The approaches of the enemy a little advanced. The enemy's galley fired all night. He commenced another battery opposite the town, on the banks of Ashley River.

15th—Fire from the batteries and works as before. The enemy had a bomb battery. His second parallel commenced, and manned by the Chasseurs, who kept up a continued fire upon our lines.

16th—In addition to his usual fire, the enemy opened his new battery. Last night we extended from our redoubt a counter-mine with a small parallel whence we could return the fire of the enemy's musketry. This evening one of our Gallies ascended Cooper river to a place whence she enfiladed the English camp for several hours, which was briskly answered by field pieces from the camp.

17th—The enemy enfiladed the town on all sides last night and threw a great quantity of bombs—sometimes from fifteen to twenty at once. We worked upon our counter mine. We received intelligence from our detachment at Lamprieres [Lempriere's Point], that one thousand or fifteen hundred of the enemy under General Lord Cornwallis had passed Monk's Corner, Strawberry, Bonneau's Ferry, and Wappetaw, and actually arrived within six miles of the said post. This morning the enemy's second parallel was prolonged towards our left, supplied with bags of earth and full of Chasseurs.

18th—Fire from the batteries as heretofore, and a shower of musketry all day; this day like last night very rainy.

19th—Fire from the batteries as heretofore. This evening three of the enemies Gallies descended from Wappoo down Ashley river to the Fleet under a heavy fire from our batteries; one lost her main mast. This night the communication is made from the battery of the French sailors to the town.

20th—Fire from the batteries as ordinary. This evening the Ravelin commenced in front of the horn work.

21st—Fire from the batteries as ordinary. This morning the enemy had commenced two batteries, near his second parallel.

22d—Fire from the batteries as ordinary; and from the musketry more than ever. This morning a parley was sent to the enemy and the answer returned about 9 o'clock in the evening.

23d—Fire from the batteries as ordinary. The enemy extended the saps of his second parallel.

24th—Fire from the batteries as ordinary. This morning at daybreak, a party of two hundred men under Col. Henderson made a sortie up on the enemies works which caused a general fire of musketry on both sides. The party returned in a little while with twelve prisoners. Our loss was one Captain and one soldier killed.

25th—As ordinary. Last night Col. Parker of the Virginia line was killed by a musket shot.

26th—As ordinary. The enemy commenced his third parallel. Troops from a vessel and four gallies, landed at Mount Pleasant, and took possession of a battery of one piece, losing one galley in this affair.

27th—As ordinary.

28th—As ordinary. Last night our Fort at Lamprier's was evacuated, and taken possession of by the enemy to-day. It was not until this moment

that Charlestown was completely invested; the enemy having possession of James Island, Wappoo, Charlestown Neck, Hobcaw Point, Lamprieres, and Haddrell's Point; and his fleet anchored in the Roadstead before the town.

29th—As ordinary. The enemy's third parallel almost finished, and a battery commenced; as likewise a redoubt on our side.

30th—As ordinary.

May 1st, 2nd, and 3rd—As ordinary. Our hospital ship taken by the English and carried higher up the river.

4th, 5th, and 6th—The enemy employed in making three batteries upon his third parallel. And we to make two redoubts.

7th—This morning at eight o'clock Fort Moultrie capitulated. A sixty-gun ship joined the English Fleet.

8th—As ordinary. Another redoubt was commenced last night in rear of our left line. This morning the enemy sent a parley again to demand the town—the truce was prolonged throughout the whole day. In a Council of War composed of all the officers of the General Staff, it was resolved by a majority of votes, to propose a capitulation.

9th—The enemy had cannon mounted in the batteries of his third parallel. The two commanders not agreeing upon the terms of capitulation the siege commenced this evening at nine o'clock with greater warmth than ever.

May 10th—As ordinary.

11th—As ordinary. The enemy's trenches are extended under the abatis of the advanced battery. This afternoon a parley was sent to the enemy to propose fresh terms of capitulation.

12th—The terms were accepted, and the English army took possession of the town. The English have worked very hard upon the fortifications. All that I can learn is, that they have strengthened the profiles of the lines; that they have constructed a Fort at Hampstead . . . and some redoubts more advanced; they have also commenced a battery on Shultz's Folly—but the foundation is scarcely raised.

—Gibbes, *Documentary History*,
2:124–28.

Among the captured at Charleston was Army Chief of Engineers Louis Duportail. In the letter to Congress below, Duportail described the circumstances of capitulation and the debate over the terms of surrender. Throughout he evinced the Frenchman's concern that the situation be resolved without loss of honor. He also pointed out that upon arriving in late April he had judged the city must fall unless relieved. The full council of war had disagreed and flatly rejected his proposal to evacuate the city. "For my part," recounted Duportail, "[evacuation] only appeared to me difficult

and hazardous and Such as we ought to risk in our present Situation." But he congratulated the Americans for courageously resisting the siege for so long and concluded "the Ennemy have not great Subject to triumph."

5. "IN ALL THIS THE HONOR OF THE AMERICAN ARMS IS SECURE"

Louis Duportail to the President of Congress.

Charleston, 17 May 1780

Sir

You will probably heard of the surrender of Charlestown by the time you will receive this letter. I arrived here the 25th of Apl.²⁹ at seven in the morning, after having passed during the Night in the Middle of the Enemies, through the Woods with the assistance of good Guides. I found the Town in a desperate State almost entirely invested by the British Army and Fleet which had passed the Bar and Fort Moultrie. They had surmounted difficulties which were generally looked upon as insuperable without experiencing scarce any resistance. The Ennemy had brought their trenches upon the Neck within about 120 or 130 Yards from the Fortifications; in a word the fall of the Town was unavoidable unless an Army come to her assistance which then did not appear likely. After having examined the Situation of things I thought an evacuation highly advisable and I proposed it—but the Council found an impracticability in the Measure although for my part, it only appeared to me difficult and hazardous and Such as we ought to risk in our present Situation.

That Plan being rejected the only object was to protract the term of our Capitulation. I have done on my part every thing that was in my power to fulfill that object in the Same manner that Colonel Laumoy had before my arrival, but time brought us to lose sight of the term of our resistance. The Ennemy succeeded in draining part of the Ditch which was in front of our intrenchments and raised nine Batteries in their third Parallel. The day they opened them they Sent a flag with a Letter to summon General Lincoln to Surrender. Upon this a Council of Generals and field officers were called and after having asked whether terms ought to be proposed to the Ennemy and it was carried in the affirmative by great majority, I myself was of that number. As the first propositions were from the Ennemy we might expect advantageous Conditions, I had even Some hope that we might have Saved the Garrison; besides a positive refusal to treat with an Ennemy who within a few days could have been in a condition of giving us the law appeared imprudent and unreasonable. It was then determined in Council that propositions should be made, but afterwards by an extraordinary oversight they left to the General Officers the care of determining

what was to be proposed. This is the moment where I left off taking any part in what has been done being of a contrary opinion to that of the other Genl. officers. They agreed to propose that the Continental Troops Should be prisoners of War. I opposed that measure with all my might. I represented that if even our situation required it, it was not our business to propose it and that we Showed an ignorance of what is practised in those cases which would make us appear in a ridicule light. I represented that if I had been of opinion with the greatest Number to propose terms to the Enemy, I mean that they Should be honorable terms, both advantageous to the Army and Continent; as for instance to surrender the Town alone with the Artillery, Store and Ships; but to save the Troops; that if the army must be Prisoners of War it was more eligible to hold out in order to justify Such unfavorable Conditions by a longer resistance and more distressing Situation. My representations had not the desired affect. The propositions were made such as you will see them. Fortunately, Such as they were the majority would not grant them and proposed others less advantageous which General Lincoln did not however think proper to accept. The truce was broke and the operations of the Siege vigorously continued. But the second day after the Militia refused to do duty General Lincoln thought from this that the Capitulation was absolutely necessary and called the Council who countenanced the Measure; for my own part I thought that we ought to try before to bring the Militia to their duty by every possible Means, by acts of authority, and if necessary by exemplary punishments. This was likely deemed impracticable, and the Capitulation took place to my Great regrete Not that I think we could have held out longer than three or four days, but that we should have put the Ennemy in Such a Situation to render a further resistance on our part blamable to every body; then our defence would have done us much More honor. It is true that in that case the conditions would not likely have been the Same but I was for Sacrificing that advantage to a little more glory. Fortunately in all this the honor of the American arms is Secure and the Ennemy have not great Subject to triumph. To remain fourty two days in open trenches before a Town of an immense extent fortified by sandy Intrenchments raised in two months without covered way, without out works, open in Several places on the water Side, exposed every where to attacks and defended by a Garrison which was not sufficient by half to what was necessary, before Such a place I say and display all the appearance of a regular Siege, is nothing very glorious. The English General has perhaps followed the rule of prudence in conducting himself so—but at best the troops that he commanded have assuredly no reason to boast of their ardor or enterprising spirit; while on the other hand the American troops gave certain proof of their firmness to support, for more than forty days, a terrible fire—and to remain so long exposed to the danger of surprises, or attacks *de vive force*, which were certain of success if the enemy took its measures carefully.

M. de Laumoy and the engineers whom he has under his orders, have been so busy constructing the fortifications of Charlestown, both before and during the seige that there was no time to make a design of the plans—this deprives me of the satisfaction of sending them to Congress—supposing indeed the enemy would permit it.

—Papers of the Continental Congress, roll 181.

The British held the Charleston captives nearby at Haddrel's Point, where Duportail remained until he was exchanged in November 1780. In a letter to the Chevalier de La Luzerne, the French ambassador to the United States, Duportail starkly depicted the discomforts of his situation.

6. "I AM HERE IN A FLAT COUNTRY WHERE GREEN STAGNANT POOLS EXHALE CORRUPTION"

Louis Duportail to the Chevalier de La Luzerne.

7 July 1780

. . . At this moment, M. le Chevalier, you are doubtless living in one of the pleasant country houses near Philadelphia. You are enjoying the beautiful season of July—a moderate climate with pleasing prospects. I am sure you walk daily in cool woods—whereas I am here in a flat country where green stagnant pools exhale corruption—there is no water fit to drink—the soil is nothing but sand which burns the flat of the foot and blinds one when the wind blows. Although we are surrounded with woods we are not allowed to walk in them and they are of a kind of pine that gives no shade and interrupts the little air one might enjoy. Corn and potatoes are the only products of the country . . . one sees a few negroes—covered with a few miserable rags . . . and wretched peasants only a little less dark than their negroes—who go about barefooted and without education or politeness. . . . At night, if one does not have two mosquito nets there is no hope of closing the eyes. Even so the noise they make keeps one awake—any way, no matter what is done they manage to enter in an infinite number of places and the body is covered with bites which oblige one perpetually to scratch with both hands. I have had to stop this letter twenty times for that reason. You will see Monsieur, how we pass our time here, and you may judge how much I wish to leave this place. . . .

—Kite, *Duportail*, pp. 177–78.

After Charleston the rebel position in the south reached its nadir. The British controlled Georgia with redcoats stationed at Savannah and Augusta, and South Carolina with troops at Ninety-Six, Orangeburg, and Forts Granby, Watson, and Motte. Leaving Cornwallis behind to consolidate British strength, Clinton returned victorious to New York.

Over General George Washington's objections Congress appointed Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates, the hero of Saratoga, to replace Lincoln as commander of the Southern Department. Gates's mission was to revitalize patriot morale and win back territory. As evidenced by the disastrous American defeat at Camden (August 1780), he failed miserably. Thus in early December Congress gave the command to Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Greene, Washington's original choice. Greene acted decisively. Daringly dividing his army, he went on the offensive.

North Carolina's landscape was laced with rivers that could be either obstacles to success or instruments of mobility, depending upon circumstances and Greene's knowledge of the rivers. To learn more, the general called on Thaddeus Kosciuszko, his only engineer,³⁰ to reconnoiter the Catawba River. Greene also sent Lt. Col. Edward Carrington, an officer in the 1st Continental Artillery detailed to serve as Greene's quartermaster general, to explore the Roanoke and Dan rivers, and Brig. Gen. Edward Stevens, an officer in the Virginia militia, to explore the Yadkin River. Their orders required reports on the depth and flow of the rivers; the location of obstacles such as rocks, shoals, and falls; road conditions; and the distance between towns. In short, Greene wanted to know everything pertaining to transportation possibilities on the rivers year-round. The resulting surveys were the earliest made of these rivers. Although the reports do not survive, very likely they were invaluable to Greene's campaign.

Greene entrusted a variety of tasks to Kosciuszko, whom he once called "Master of his profession."³¹ When Greene wanted a new camp where he could rest and train his army and repair equipment, he sent Kosciuszko to find the spot. After exploring the Pedee River in mid-December 1780, Kosciuszko chose an excellent site at Cheraw Hills, South Carolina. On 1 January 1781 Greene gave Kosciuszko an important new assignment: overseeing the construction of flat-bottomed boats to be transported overland in wagons and used by the army in amphibious operations.

Lacking enough men to make an effective stand, Greene led Cornwallis on a 200-mile chase toward Virginia. Intending to avoid capture by crossing into Virginia if necessary, Greene dispatched Kosciuszko ahead to erect earthworks at Boyd's Ferry on the north shore of the Dan. Cornwallis persisted and on February 14 finally forced Greene to cross into Virginia. Greene used some of Kosciuszko's boats and immediately took cover behind the engineer's hastily erected defenses. Without boats of his own Cornwallis reluctantly gave up the pursuit.

Greene's escape across the Dan was crucial to the survival of the American cause in the south. Cornwallis had barely withdrawn when

Greene's men began moving back across the river. Anxious to reestablish himself in North Carolina, the American general sent Kosciuszko east to Halifax on the Roanoke River with instructions to erect fortifications if they could be done quickly. The trip over bad roads through territory thickly populated with Tories was difficult, but miraculously the engineer made it in less than three days. Characteristically, Kosciuszko regretted taking so long. "As I Could not get Horses on the road, and was Obligated to go foot part of the way," he apologized to Greene, "you will be pleased to thing [think] that I have don what I Could."³² Once at Halifax Kosciuszko wasted no time. The morning after his arrival he surveyed the town and concluded at least six redoubts would be required to defend the place adequately. As there were few entrenching tools and no militia or Negroes to do the job, he recommended against fortifications. Only the town's stores and magazines would entice the enemy to attack. So, in Kosciuszko's opinion, the best solution was to evacuate them from the town.³³

Greene spent the next several months recapturing British outposts in the Carolina backcountry. There were victories and reverses, but by fall the enemy had been driven to the coast. As Greene asserted, "We fight, get beat, rise, and fight again."³⁴ Along the way Kosciuszko selected and fortified encampments and during most battles directed the erection of fortifications.

Greene's push against the British was ably assisted by men such as Lt. Col. Henry "Light-Horse Harry" Lee, commander of Lee's Legion, a corps of three troops of cavalry and three companies of infantry. Lee's *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department* is a marvelous source for the story of the successful American campaign to win back the south. Below are excerpts dealing with the sieges of British outposts at Fort Watson, Augusta, and Ninety-Six in the period April–June 1781.

During the siege of Fort Watson in mid-April the rebels utilized a new device, a prefabricated log crib with a gun platform, known as a Maham tower after its designer, Col. Hezekiah Maham, commander of an independent South Carolina dragoon regiment. Maham was not an officer in the Corps of Engineers but his tower ranks as one of the war's significant innovations in siege works. The Maham tower, which rose above the walls of the British forts, was a very practical solution to the rebels' shortage of artillery and entrenching tools. Success at Fort Watson led to its use at Augusta and Ninety-Six.

7. A MAHAM TOWER IS USED AGAINST FORT WATSON

From Henry Lee's memoirs.

April 1781. . . . On the evening of the 15th, [Lt. Col. Francis] Marion and [Lt. Col. Henry] Lee took a position in the open country, with [Col.

John] Watson to their left, considerably below them, and on the route for the fort called by his name, which he had erected.

Determined to carry this post without delay, Marion and Lee sat down before it early in the evening; not doubting, from the information received, that the garrison must soon be compelled to surrender, for want of water, with which it was supplied from an adjacent lake, and from which the garrison might be readily and effectually secluded. In a very few hours the customary mode of supplying the post with water was completely stopped; and had the information received been correct, a surrender of the garrison could not have been long delayed. The ground selected by colonel Watson for his small stockade, was an Indian mount, generally conceived to be the cemetery of the tribe inhabiting the circumjacent region: it was at least thirty feet high, and surrounded by table land. Captain M'Koy, the commandant, saw at once his inevitable fate, unless he could devise some other mode of procuring water, for which purpose he immediately cut a trench secured by abatis from his fosse to the river, which passed close to the Indian mount. Baffled in their expectation, and destitute both of artillery and intrenching tools, Marion and Lee despaired of success; when . . . Maham, of South Carolina, accompanying the brigadier, suggested a plan, which was no sooner communicated than adopted. He proposed to cut down a number of suitable trees in the nearest wood, and with them to erect a large strong oblong pen, to be covered on the top with a floor of logs, and protected on the side opposite to the fort with a breast work of light timber. To the adjacent farms dragoons were despatched for axes, the only necessary tool, of which a sufficient number being soon collected, relays of working parties were allotted for the labour; some to cut, some to convey, and some to erect. . . . Maham undertook the execution of his plan, which was completely finished before the morning of the 23d, effective as to the object, and honourable to the genius of the inventor. The besieged was, like the besieger, unprovided with artillery, and could not interrupt the progress of a work, the completion of which must produce immediate submission.

A party of riflemen, being ready, took post in the Maham tower the moment it was completed; and a detachment of musketry, under cover of the riflemen, moved to make a lodgment in the enemy's ditch, supported by the legion infantry with fixed bayonets. Such was the effect of the fire from the riflemen, having thorough command of every part of the fort, from the relative supereminence of the tower, that every attempt to resist the lodgment was crushed. The commandant, finding every resource cut off, hung out the white flag. It was followed by a proposal to surrender, which issued in a capitulation. This incipient operation having been happily effected by the novel and effectual device of . . . Maham, to whom the commandants very gratefully expressed their acknowledgment, Marion and Lee, preceded by the legion cavalry under major Rudolph, who had been

detached on the day subsequent to the investiture of the fort, turned their attention to lieutenant colonel Watson, now advancing from below to relieve his garrison. Knowing that the fall of Camden was closely connected with the destruction of Watson, the American commandants viewed with delight his approach; and having disposed of the prisoners, moved to join the cavalry, now retiring in front of the enemy.

—Lee, *Memoirs*, pp. 218–19.

8. LEE RECOUNTS THE SIEGE OF AUGUSTA

From Henry Lee's memoirs.

May–June, 1781. The works contiguous to the [Savannah] river had advanced nearly to the required state, and those which had been subsequently commenced in the rear of the fort [Fort Cornwallis] began to assume a formidable appearance yet extreme difficulty occurred in the consummation of the plans adopted by the besiegers, as the surrounding ground presented no swell or hill which would enable them to bring their six pounder to bear upon the enemy. It was determined to resort to the Maham tower, the effect of which Lee had so happily witnessed at fort Watson; and orders were accordingly issued to prepare and bring in timber of such a size as would sustain our only piece of artillery.

Browne³⁵ heretofore had patiently looked on at our approach, diligently working within his fort, as we discovered by the heaps of fresh dug earth in various directions; but with what view remained unascertained. Seeing that his enemy's works were rapidly advancing, he now determined to interrupt our progress by sallies, however hazardous, which he foresaw could alone retard his approaching fate—hoping that in the delay he might find safety. On the 28th [May] he fell upon our works in the river quarter at midnight, and, by the suddenness and vigour of his onset, drove the guard before him; but the support under captain Handy coming up, after an obstinate conflict, regained the trenches, and forced the enemy to take shelter in the fort. The determined spirit manifested by the foe in this attempt to destroy our approaches, induced lieutenant colonel Lee to appropriate his infantry exclusively for their defence at night, relieving them from any further share in labour and from every other duty. It was divided into two divisions, to one of which was alternately committed the protection of our works. On the succeeding night Browne renewed his attempt in the same quarter; and for a long time the struggle was continued with mutual pertinacity, till at length captain Rudolph, by a combined charge with the bayonet, cleared the trenches, driving the enemy with loss to his strong hold. On the 30th the timber required to build the Maham tower was

prepared and conveyed to the intended site. In the evening we commenced its erection, under cover of an old house to conceal our object from the enemy. In the course of the night and ensuing day we had brought our tower nearly on a level with the enemy's parapet, and began to fill its body with fascines, earth, stone, brick, and every other convenient rubbish, to give solidity and strength to the structure. At the same time the adjacent works, in the rear of the fort, were vigorously pushed to the enemy's left to connect them with the tower, the point of termination.

Browne's attention was soon drawn to this quarter; and, penetrating the use to which the log building would be applied, he determined to demolish it without delay.

[Brig. Gen. Andrew] Pickens and Lee, well assured from what had passed that their judicious opponent would leave nothing unessayed within his power to destroy their tower—on the completion of which their expectation of immediate success chiefly depended—determined to prepare before night for the counteraction of any attempt which might be made. . . . The tower was designated as the peculiar object of attention, and to its defence one company of musketry was exclusively applied. Not more than one third of the night had passed when the enemy began to move; concealing his real object by renewing his attempt upon the river quarter, where Rudolph, with his accustomed gallantry, gave him a warm reception. While the contest here was bravely urged, and as bravely sustained, lieutenant colonel Browne, with the elite of his garrison, fell upon our works in his rear. Here for awhile the militia of Pickens contended with vigour, but at length were forced by the bayonet out of the trenches. Handy, leaving one company at the tower, with his main body hastened to support the militia, who very gallantly united with the regulars, and turned upon the successful foe. The conflict became furious; but at length the Marylanders under Handy carried the victory by the point of the bayonet. Upon this occasion the loss on both sides exceeded all which had occurred during the siege. Browne, finding that every effort to destroy our works by open war proved ineffectual, now resorted to stratagem. Lee had omitted to pull down, as was originally intended, the old wooden house, under cover of which the tower had been commenced, and which by accidentally taking fire would have probably consumed it. This house attracted Browne's notice, and he determined, by burning it, to rid himself of the tower. He had by this time erected a platform in one of the angles of the fort opposite to our Maham tower, and which, being mounted with two of his heaviest pieces or ordnance, opened upon it before it was finished.

Nevertheless the exertions of the builders, did not slacken, and on the first of June the tower was completed, and was found to overlook the enemy's parapet. The upper logs having been sawed to let in an embrasure for our six pounder, it only remained to make an apron upon which the matrosses³⁶ could draw up their piece to the floor of the tower.

This was done in the course of the day, and at dawn on the second our six pounder was mounted, completely commanding the enemy's fort. Finley instantly announced his readiness to act by returning the enemy's cannonade, which had been continued without intermission. Before noon the enemy's two pieces were dismounted from the platform, and all the interior of the fort was raked, excepting the segment nearest to the tower, and some other spots sheltered by traverses.

—Lee, *Memoirs*, pp. 243–45.

In laying siege to Ninety-Six, Greene relied on the advice of Kosciuszko. The engineer's decision to concentrate the rebel effort against the star redoubt—the enemy's strong point—met with sharp criticism from Lee, who felt it was more realistic to cut off the town's water supply by seizing nearby Fort Holmes. Despite this major disagreement, Light-Horse Harry conceded that Kosciuszko was “considered skilful in his profession, and much esteemed for his mildness of disposition and urbanity of manners.”

As the siege wore on and the enemy garrison appeared on the verge of receiving reinforcements, Lee deplored Kosciuszko's failure to attack the enemy's left. Had he done so earlier, Lee believed, the enemy, deprived of water, would already have surrendered. Kosciuszko, on the other hand, maintained that he did not have enough men to lay siege to the enemy's left and right simultaneously, so “we thought proper to begin against the Star redoubt.” The engineer offered no further explanation for the choice. Finally Lee personally directed a successful assault against Fort Holmes, but it proved too late.

All along the enemy's best hope was for fresh troops. When relief finally appeared within striking distance on 18 June 1781 Greene reluctantly agreed to storm the fort after “his soldiers, with one voice, intreated to be led against [it].” As described by Lee, the attack failed and Greene abandoned the siege.

The following accounts of the siege by Lee and Kosciuszko emphasize the disruptive effect of repeated enemy sorties against the rebel works. Indeed, the first night's accomplishments were immediately destroyed. During another British sally the night of June 9, the enemy surprised Kosciuszko while he inspected a mine shaft he was building near the star fort. Luckily the engineer escaped with only a wound.³⁷

9. KOSCIUSZKO “PRESSED FORWARD HIS APPROACH WITH INDEFATIGABLE LABOUR”

From Henry Lee's memoirs.

Colonel Kosciuszko, a Polish officer, at the head of the engineers in the southern army, was considered skilful in his profession, and much

esteemed for his mildness of disposition and urbanity of manners. To this officer general Greene committed the designation of the course and mode of approach. Never regarding the importance which was attached to depriving the enemy of water, for which he depended on the rivulet to his left, Kosciusko applied his undivided attention to the demolition of the star, the strongest point of the enemy's defence. Breaking ground close to this fortress,³⁸ he laboured during the first night [21 May 1781] with diligence, but had not been able to place in great forwardness his incipient works. No sooner was this attempt of the besieger perceived, than lieutenant colonel Cruger³⁹ determined to prepare a platform in one of the salient angles of the star, opposite to our works, for the reception of three pieces of artillery, all he possessed, with intention to cover a detachment charged with the expulsion of our working parties, to be followed by a second for the demolition of the works. Before noon the platform was finished, and the artillery mounted in it. The parapet was manned with infantry; and the sallying party . . . ready in the enemy's ditch, rushed upon our works, covered by the artillery and musketry. [Lt. Col. John] Roney drove before him our guards and working parties, putting to the bayonet all whom he found; and was followed by a detachment of loyalists, who quickly demolished the works, carrying off the intrenching tools. The enemy sustained no loss in this first exhibition of his decision and courage, but that of lieutenant Roney, who died of a wound he received while gallantly leading on his men.

So judiciously was this sally planned, and so rapidly conducted, that, although Greene instantly sent a detachment to support Kosciusko, the object was accomplished before support could arrive. Taught by this essay that his enemy was of a cast not to be rashly approached, Kosciusko was directed to resume his labours under cover of a ravine, and at a more respectful distance [400 yards]. He broke ground again in the night of the 23d, still directing his approaches against the star redoubt. . . .

General Greene had exerted himself, with unremitting industry, to complete the works against the star redoubt; to which single object colonel Kosciusko directed all his efforts. The enemy's left had been entirely neglected, although in that quarter was procured the chief supply of water. As soon as the corps of Lee entered camp [8 June], that officer was directed to take post opposite to the enemy's left and to commence regular approaches against the stockade [Fort Holmes]. Very soon Lee pushed his ditch to the ground designated for the erection of the battery, under the cover of which the subsequent approaches would be made. In the course of the next day this battery was erected, and lieutenant Finn, with a six pounder, took possession of it. The besiegers advancing closer and closer, with caution and safety, both on the right and left, lieutenant colonel Cruger foresaw his inevitable destruction, unless averted by the approach of lord Rawdon.⁴⁰ To give time for the desired event, he deter-

mined, by nocturnal sallies, to attempt to carry our trenches, and to destroy with the spade whatever he might gain by the bayonet. These rencontres were fierce and frequent, directed sometimes upon one quarter sometimes upon another: but so judicious had been the arrangements of the American general to counteract these expected attempts, that in no one instance did the British commandant succeed. The mode adopted was nevertheless pursued without intermission; and although failing to effect the chief object contemplated, became extremely harassing to the American army,—whose repose during the night was incessantly disturbed, and whose labour in the day was as incessantly pressed. Ignorant of the situation and prospects of the British general as lieutenant colonel Cruger continued to be,⁴¹ he nevertheless indulged the confidence, that every effort would be made for his relief, and persevered with firmness and vigour in his defence. As soon as the second parallel was finished, general Greene directed colonel [Otho Holland] Williams, adjutant general, to summon the British commandant; stating to him his relative situation, and assuring him that perseverance in resistance would be vain, and might produce disagreeable consequences to himself and garrison. Cruger returned, by his adjutant, a verbal answer; declaring his determination to hold out to the last extremity, and his perfect disregard of general Greene's promises or threats. Failing in this attempt, our batteries opened from the second parallel, under cover of which Kosciusko pressed forward his approach with indefatigable labour. . . .

Our approaches continued to be pushed with unabated diligence, in the hope that they might be brought to maturity in time to enforce the submission of the garrison, before the British general could make good his long march.⁴²

We now began to deplore the early inattention of the chief engineer to the enemy's left; persuaded that had he been deprived of the use of the rivulet in the beginning of the siege, he must have been forced to surrender before the present hour. It was deemed practicable to set fire to the stockade fort, and thus to demolish the water defence on the left of the rivulet. In the succeeding day, a dark violent storm came on from the west, without rain. Lieutenant colonel Lee proposed to general Greene to permit him to make the attempt. This being granted, a sergeant with nine privates of the legion infantry, furnished with combustible matter, was directed to approach the stockade in the most concealed direction, under cover of the storm, while the batteries in every quarter opened upon the enemy, and demonstrations of striking at the star redoubt were made, with the expectation of diverting his attention from the intrepid party, which, with alacrity, undertook the hazardous enterprise. The sergeant conducted his gallant band in the best manner; concealing it whenever the ground permitted, and then exposed to view crawling along upon the belly. At length he reached the ditch with three others; the whole close

behind. Here unluckily he was discovered, while in the act of applying his fire. Himself and five were killed; the remaining four escaped unhurt, although many muskets were discharged at them running through the field, before they got beyond the nearest rise of ground which could cover them from danger. After this disappointment, nothing remained but to force our works to maturity, and to retard the advance of the British army. . . .

. . . Major Greene, who commanded in the star with great ability, finding that our third parallel was nearly finished, and that a Maham tower was erecting which would overlook his parapet, very judiciously covered it with sandbags, to lessen the capacity derived from superior height, leaving between each bag an aperture for the use of his riflemen. Nor were the approaches on the left less forward than those on the right; they not only were directed against the stockade, but also were carried so near the rivulet, as to render supplies of water difficult and precarious. The fire during the 17th was so effectual, as to induce the enemy to withdraw his guards established between the rivulet and the stockade; and parties of the troops on the left were posted in various points, to annoy the communication with the rivulet. These arrangements succeeded throughout the day completely, and the enemy suffered greatly from this privation, though accomplished too late to produce material advantage. Rawdon continued to advance by forced marches

. . . [Rawdon] baffled all the measures adopted by Greene to delay his approach. It now became necessary to hazard an assault, to meet Rawdon, or to retire. The American general was disposed to immitate Caesar at Alesia; first to beat the relieving army, and then to take the besieged town. But his regular force did but little exceed the half of that under Rawdon, which added to his militia, consisting of the corps of Sumter, Marion, and Pickens, still left him numerically inferior to the British general. Nevertheless confiding in his known superiority of cavalry, he would have given battle to his lordship, could he have left an adequate corps to attend to the garrison. Compelled to relinquish this plan, he determined to storm the fort, although his works were yet unfinished. On our left, our third parallel was completed, two trenches and a mine were nearly let into the enemy's ditch, and the Maham tower was finished.

On our right, the trenches were within twenty yards of his ditch; and the battery directed by lieutenant Finn, gave to the assailant, in this quarter, advantages which, well supported, ensured success. Greene, anxiously as he desired to conclude his severe toils in triumph, was averse to the unequal contest to which he must necessarily expose his faithful troops, and would probably have decided on the safe course, had not his soldiers, with one voice, intreated to be led against the fort. The American army having witnessed the unconquerable spirit which actuated their general, as well as the unexpected results of former battles, could

not brook the idea of abandoning the siege, without one bold attempt to force a surrender. . . . Orders were issued to prepare for storming; and the hour of twelve on the next day (18th June) was appointed for the assailing columns to advance by signal from the centre battery.

. . . Fascines were prepared to fill up the enemy's ditch, long poles with iron hooks were furnished to pull down the sandbags, with every other requisite to facilitate the progress of the assailant. At eleven the third parallel was manned, and our sharp shooters took their station in the tower. The first signal was announced from the centre battery, upon which the assailing columns entered the trenches; manifesting delight in the expectation of carrying by their courage the great prize in view.

At the second cannon, which was discharged at the hour of twelve, Campbell and Lee rushed to the assault. Cruger, always prepared, received them with his accustomed firmness. The parapets were manned with spike and bayonet, and the riflemen fixed at the sand bag apertures, maintained a steady and destructive fire. [Lt. Isaac] Duval and [Lt. Samuel] Seldon entered the the enemy's ditch at different points, and [Col. Richard] Campbell stood prepared to support them, in the rear of the party furnished with hooks to pull down the sand bags. This party had also entered the enemy's ditch, and began to apply the hook. Uncovering the parapet now would have given us victory; and such was the vigorous support afforded by the musketry from the third parallel, from the riflemen in the tower, and from the artillery mounted in battery, that sanguine expectations of this happy issue were universally indulged. The moment the bags in front were pulled down, Campbell would have mounted the parapet, where the struggle could not have been long maintained. Cruger had prepared an intermediate battery with his three pieces, which he occasionally applied to right and left. At first it was directed against Lee's left, but very soon every piece was applied upon Campbell's right, which was very injurious to his column.

Major Greene, commanding in the star redoubt, sensible of the danger to which he was exposed, if the attempted lodgment upon his front curtain succeeded, determined to try the bayonet in his ditch as well as on his parapet. To captains Campbell and French was committed this bold effort. Entering into the ditch through a sally-port in the rear of the star, they took opposite directions, and soon came in contact, the one with Duval, the other with Seldon. Here ensued a desperate conflict. The Americans, not only fighting with the enemy in front but with the enemy overhead, sustained gallantly the unequal contest, until Duval and Seldon became disabled by wounds, when they yielded, and were driven back with great loss to the point of entry. The few surviving escaped with the hookmen to our trenches, where yet remained Campbell, the sand-bags not being removed. On the left, the issue was very different. Rudolph gained the enemy's ditch, and followed by the column, soon opened his way into the

fort, from which the enemy, giving their last fire, precipitately retreated. Measures were in train on the part of Lee, to follow up his blow by passing the rivulet, entering the town, and forcing the fortified prison, whence the left might have yielded substantial aid to the attack upon the star, by compelling Cruger to struggle for the town, or forcing him with all his troops to take refuge in the star; a situation not long to be held, crowded as he must have been, and destitute of water. The adverse fortune experienced by our left column, made the mind of Greene return to his cardinal policy, the preservation of adequate force to keep the field.

Charmed with the courage displayed in his view, and regretting its disadvantageous application, he sent orders to Campbell to draw off, and to Lee to desist from further advance, but to hold the stockade abandoned by the enemy.

Our loss amounted, during the siege, to one hundred and eighty-five killed and wounded; that of the garrison to eighty-five. . . .

. . . Gloom and silence pervaded the American camp: every one disappointed—every one mortified. Three days more, and Ninety-Six must have fallen; but this short space was unattainable. Rawdon had approached our vicinity with a force not to be resisted, and it only remained to hold the army safe, by resuming that system which adverse fortune had rendered familiar to us. Greene alone preserved his equanimity; and, highly pleased by the unshaken courage displayed in the assault, announced his grateful sense of the conduct of the troops, as well during the siege as in the attack; presaging from the past, the happiest result whenever an opportunity should be presented of contending with the enemy upon equal terms—to the attainment of which his best exertions would be invariably directed, relying, as he did, upon the same dauntless spirit recently exhibited. Conscious as the army was of having done its duty, it derived consolation from this exhilarating address, and burying in oblivion the grating repulse, looked forward with the anticipation of soon displaying their courage in a decisive battle.

—Lee, *Memoirs*, pp. 240–42,
252–57.

10. “BLIND FORTUNE NOT ALWAYS KEEP PACE WITH COURAGE AND GOOD CAUSE”

Thaddeus Kosciuszko’s notes on the siege of Ninety-Six.

[Viewing] the Enemy’s Works on every side, . . . it appeared that the Star Redoubt upon our left was the Strongest post, not only by being completely finished but that it commanded the others two to our right one in which the Town was inclosed distant at one Hundred and fifty yards and situated

near the water and the other small more upon our right at Three Hundred and fifty yards. Thos all three redoubts had Communication with each other by Coverd way. . . . Not strong enough to capture the trenches to our left and wright at the same time against the Garison of about 500 strong we thought proper to begin against the Star redoubt. . . .

Accordingly the same night [21 May 1781] the battery was made with two fleches to suport it at one hundred and fifty yard from the Star redoubt, but as the troops were novice to the operation of that kind and begon in the night far advanced it was not Complited at a break day to bring the Canon Pices The Ennemys vigilant took the advantage and in the morning at 9 Clock made in considerable nomber the Sallies suporting it by the musketry and Artillery from the Fort. . . .

On the 27 of May in the night the Battery was made at 220 yards distant with the aproches of Thirty yards farther—[here] the Workmen began to be exposed to the Continuel of the Enemys fire all night and the [succeeding] but, more danger forseen, was imediatly conteracted by more Exertions of the Troops.—As the Nature of the Ground was very hard and aproched very much to Soft Stone the Approches Could not be so fast adwanced.

On the 30th of May the Parallel was half done at one Hundred and fifty yards and [here] the Second Sallies the Enemys made but with small effect—Three or four men of both side were killed. The militia now began come very fast from the adjacent Countys, which gave oportunity to [open] the Trenches against the smal Redoubt [Fort Holmes] mention(ed) upon our right—And the same day the Battery was made at 250 yards with the aproches of 70 yards more advanced.

The 4th of the June upon our left the parallel Complited, the Battery was made at 180 yards . . . with the fleche 30 yards more advanced and the same day in the night the Enemys Trow down the roofs of the houses in the Town and in the Star redoubt and made the Sallies suporting with Canon from the work upon our left with no other Sucess then to cut down the mantelet wich there was posted to Cover the workmen from Rifle shot and [quiet] them (the British) if possible by ours.

The Next day upon our left we desmount the Canon in the star Redoubt from the Battery and killed few men in it.

The 6 we [heightened] our Battery Station to 20 feet which oblidge the Enemy to intranche inside half way with the parapet of sixteen feet high.—We advanced the aproches but very little and Complit the paralell upon our left at 120 yards. . . .

The same night [June 9] The Ennemys made Sallies with prodigious fury and killed 4 or 5 men,—on the 12 upon our left the aproches begon from two places of the Paralell, in side of which the Rifle Battery also begon to stop the Ennemys Riflem(en) who were so industrious and great marksmen that no finger wold be held up half second without been Cut of.

On the 14th the Rifle Battery Complited 30 feet high, the Gallery advanced 30 yards and the aproches 20 yards and on our left 40.—On the 16

the Battery was made upon our left.—The Gallery was near to four feet of the Ennemys Dich and the Approches 6 feet.—On the 17th the General reciving the last account of Lord Rawdon coming with 2000 men to relieve the Garison of Ninety Six and been sonear that would oblidge us rise the Siedge the next morning. Thoght prudent to try the ardor and enxiaty of the Troops by the attack upon both redoubts—number of Officers and soldiers hearing the intention of the General present(ed) self as Wolunteers. But happy lot fell upon few—at 9th Clock in the morning the attack begon—blind fortune not always keep pace with Curage and Good Cause—Colo Lee' upon our right took posesion of the smal redobt with very small loss.—But Colo. Campbell upon our left was unsuccessful in this attact—Capt Amstrong and 30 soldiers were killed of which Valor intrepidity left us Chearish their memory, regret the loss and bring the Example to posterity.

—Haiman, *Kosciuszko*,
pp. 111–14.

Greene's troops rested for several weeks after the retreat from Ninety-Six but resumed the offensive in August. In September, at Eutaw Springs, South Carolina, Greene fought and lost his last major battle. Yet the British army was so weakened that ultimate American victory seemed only a matter of time. Although the redcoats held on at Savannah until July 1782 and at Charleston until the following December, Cornwallis's defeat at Yorktown in October 1781 (discussed in detail in the following chapter) only left Greene the task of countering the enemy's continued yet hopeless resistance.

Throughout 1782 Kosciuszko remained with Greene, serving more often as an officer of the line than as an engineer. For a while he commanded a post at Ashley Ferry, where he observed enemy movements at Charleston. His duties included acting as an intermediary between Greene and the patriot community in British-occupied Charleston. Kosciuszko proved himself a competent commander. In November he led a surprise attack on enemy troops as they cut wood outside Fort Johnson at the entrance to Charleston harbor. This skirmish was a heated affair. His coat torn by cannonballs, Kosciuszko narrowly escaped injury.

After the British evacuation of Charleston in December 1782 Kosciuszko stayed with Greene until spring 1783. A warm friendship had developed between them. As Kosciuszko left the Southern Department Greene expounded on the engineer's "attention, vigilance, and industry" in war. Greene found Kosciuszko to be a man "whom no pleasure could seduce, no labor fatigue, and no danger deter." Above all, in Greene's view, his chief engineer possessed "an unparalleled modesty and entire consciousness of having done anything extraordinary."⁴³